Concrete

#61

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S

COMICS INTERVIEW

A CHAT WITH THE CHAMP!

PAUL CHADWICK

A TALK WITH —

RANDY STRADLEY & MIKE RICHARDSON

EDITOR & PUBLISHER OF DARK HORSE COMICS

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PAUL CHADWICK
art & colors

The land of the free.

That's what we call the United States right in our national anthem. Many times you will hear people making statements such as, "It's a free county," in reference to America.

My dictionary defines freedom as "the condition of being free of restraints." Needless to say, it has quite a few other definitions (all along the same lines) but this is the one they placed first. And that definition may make a wonderful text book definition. It would be perfectly acceptable for a student to use on a quiz. But it really sucks as a working definition of what we usually *mean* when we say freedom. (Actually, I can't speak for anyone other than myself. I know there are many, many people whose idea of freedom I would consider to be *oppression*.)

Okay, here's my definition of freedom: ***the right to be responsible for your own actions.***

That's it. I read it in a book called A MATTER FOR MEN by **David Gerrold** (of "The Trouble With Tribbles" fame). I adopted it for my own once I read it, though. Because it throughly defines *my* idea of freedom.

So what does all of this mean? It means if I wish to drive a car without a seat belt (just for the record, I *do* wear seat belts), that it should be no one's business but mine. It means if I wish to watch a sexually explicit movie then no one should have the right to tell me I cannot. It means if I wish to accept a job working for less than some arbitrarily determined minimum wage, than it concerns no one other than myself and my employer. It means if, as an employer, I am foolish enough to wish to eliminate a large portion of the available job force based entirely upon race or sex, it should be my right.

There are many more examples I could put forth; however, these four will suffice. Notice that there are laws — laws which are enforced — on the books across this nation which make it illegal for me to do any of these four things. Regardless of the fact that it is my life and my money that is involved, I am *not* free to use them as I see fit. The government has taken away my right to be responsible for my own actions.

What does this tell me?

It tells me we don't live in a free country.

Some may argue that our country has more freedom than most others. That may well be. However, by my definition you are either free or you are not. In this world, I am not.

Henry

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Photo: Ron Lith

Paul and his wife, Elizabeth. Above, Ronald "Concrete" Lithgow.

I started innocently enough, with a phone call. The fact that it was from publisher/editor/writer David Anthony Kraft (or DAK to those of us who know him) — who usually doesn't fill Ma Bell's coffers just to ring me up and say "hi" — should have set off an alarm or two, but it didn't. Since it was drawing nigh to AMAZING HEROES PREVIEW time, I suspected that the call was to help me gather information about the many comics he publishes (SOUTHERN KNIGHTS, MICRA, CYCOPS, and MAGNA-MAN). It wasn't.

"Bob," he jovially began, "How'd you like to do an interview for me?" Great, I thought, I've finally got an editor where I want him, offering me an assignment. Secretly I began to gloat. "Sure, Dave, who's it gonna be?" I asked, already spending the truckload of loot I was going to demand for my services. "Paul Chadwick, creator of CONCRETE," came the reply. I had heard of CONCRETE. A friend of mine had once referred to it as "The Thing, except grey." And, according to the fan press, it was a well-crafted, interesting, funny, innovative and generally well-produced b&w comic. I never read it.

My reason for this was really very simple. I couldn't afford to buy another comic, even if it was well crafted, interesting, funny, and innovative. I mean, who cares, right? But, seeing as I'm not one to turn down an assignment, I agreed. Then DAK dropped the other shoe. "Paul doesn't want to do a phoner, so you have to drive up to talk to him, and I need it in two weeks." Gak! My cerebellum fused. AH PREVIEW began in three weeks. I was doomed.

Not wanting to walk into the interview blind, I went out and bought all the Dark Horse comics I could find with Concrete in them. This done, I traveled the 60 minutes or so to Paul's studio, and spent some two hours chatting with him (and briefly with his charming wife). Another hour back home, popping the tape in the mail to the transcriber, and I thought I was all done.

Not hardly.

I was hooked. CONCRETE is more than just, "The Thing, except grey." In fact Ben Grimm would need more than just a dye-job and a face lift to become akin to Ronald Lithgow, former speechwriter, and currently human-trapped-in-an-alien-shell which is Concrete. Paul Chadwick is a well-mannered, soft spoken transplanted Californian who crafts wonderfully involving stories that quietly draw readers into unique slice-of-life events surrounding real-life people in slightly extraordinary circumstances. CONCRETE is not a

All art accompanying this interview is © 1972-88 Paul Chadwick, unless otherwise noted

fast and hitting the barrier and flipping."

CHADWICK

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Paul Chadwick
Born: 3 September 1957 — Seattle, WA
Occupation: Writer/artist
Education: BFA Art Center College of Design 1979, University of Washington, 1977-78
Comics Credits: DAZZLER #38-42 (Marvel, 1984-5) SALIMBA 3D #1-2 (Blackthorne, 1986) CONCRETE #1-8 . . . (Dark Horse 1987-present) DARK HORSE PRESENTS #1, 6, 8, 10, 12 (etc.) (Dark Horse, 1986-present)
Covers: MIGHTY MOUSE #1 (Spotlight, 1987) Blood of Dracula (Apple, forthcoming) ACTION WEEKLY (DC, forthcoming)
Pet Peeves: Talking eye panels
Phobia: Having my arm broken backwards while hand-signaling for a left turn at an intersection

member of the punch-'em-up long-underwear set. He's just like you or me, except he's a large grey rock-like being.

As for me, I now pick up CONCRETE regularly, and plan how I'll get even with DAK . . .

BOB SODARO: *Now for the Paul Chadwick story. Tell me, Paul, what was it in your childhood that led to CONCRETE?* (Laughter.)

PAUL CHADWICK: I'll take that as an invitation to give my background. I grew up near Seattle on a finger of land projecting into Lake Washington called Evergreen Point. If you've ever been to Seattle you've probably driven over the Evergreen Point floating bridge.

BOB: *Floating bridge? What's a floating bridge?*

PAUL: It's a bridge made out of concrete that has air pockets molded into it so that it floats.

BOB: *Why would you want a bridge to float?*

PAUL: Well, Lake Washington is an exceptionally deep, glacial lake, and it just wasn't practical to put posts all the way down to the bottom, so there are two floating bridges on the lake now.

BOB: *Interesting that someone would conceive of a bridge that would float. Are these heavily traversed bridges?*

PAUL: Oh yeah. They're the main commuter routes for people who work in Seattle.

BOB: *Does it ever break off and float out to sea?* (Laughter.)

PAUL: No, they're pretty sturdy. There's kind of a strange design to the older one, which goes across Mercer Island; there's this place where the bridge divides, and an oval-shaped section of water exists inside. People would commit suicide by driving really fast and hitting the barrier and flipping up into the water in the middle of it. Frequently they'd do it late at night and no one would notice; so when such a suicide *would* be seen, they'd send divers down and they'd find *another* suicide down there.

BOB: *Are you sure they were suicides?*

PAUL: Well, no, that's an assumption, to be honest.

BOB: *It could just as easily be a drunk*

"I became a big Marvel devotee because of an

driver.

PAUL: That's true, though you had to drive awfully fast. This is the story that my family would tell me. I guess I accepted it at face value. Anyway, Evergreen Point was, I now realize, a fairly affluent suburb and had a low enough turnover that there was a neighborhood feeling. It was a nice place to grow up. There was a public dock where we'd go swimming. A lot of our friends had places on the lake. There was sailing and water skiing, and a great big park which we called the Creepy Woods that I went through each day to school — I could walk to my elementary school. So it was almost small town living, although Bellevue (the city my neighborhood was technically part of) is massive — it's almost one of these mega-counties that they speak of that have no character anymore and sprawl everywhere and have huge populations. I had a pretty normal suburban childhood, although my parents did divorce when I was five.

BOB: *So tell me, the fact that you were going over this concrete bridge, did it* — (Laughter.)

PAUL: That's it, welling up in my subconscious.

BOB: *When did you start reading comics, or take them seriously?*

PAUL: When I was about twelve . . . no, I guess I was eleven. In '68 I became a Marvel devotee because I read what is now a very obscure comic called GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY — it was one of their anthology books, MARVEL SUPER-HEROES or something like that — written by **Arnold Drake** and drawn by **Gene Colan.** It was my comics "epiphany" and I became a rabid Marvelmaniac after that. You never know what'll do it.

BOB: *A card carrying Marvel zombie. Did you buy other books?*

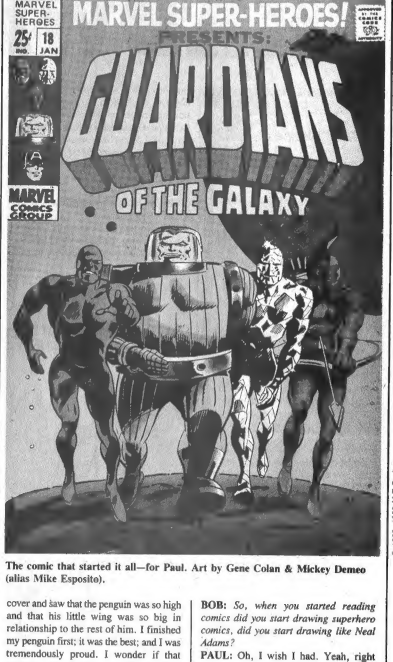
PAUL: I recognized the quality of **Neal Adams'** draughtsmanship and I did pick up the work he did for DC at that time.

BOB: *When did you start drawing?*

PAUL: Right away.

BOB: *Before you started reading comics, after you started reading comics — did you take your crayons and decorate your Mother's walls?*

PAUL: *(Pause.)* Here is a seminal **Paul Chadwick** experience: I was in the third grade. We read a book about a penguin. We were told to make a picture of this penguin out of black and white construction paper. For the first time in my life — of course I drew like all children — but for the first time in my life I *observed* something, I *looked* at the book



The comic that started it all—for Paul. Art by Gene Colan & Mickey Demeo (alias Mike Esposito).

© 1968, 1969 M.E.G., Inc.

cover and saw that the penguin was so high and that his little wing was so big in relationship to the rest of him. I finished my penguin first; it was the best; and I was tremendously proud. I wonder if that caused me to become an artist, wanting to recapture that feeling again from when I was eight years old. Could be.

BOB: *Then why not a concrete penguin?* (Laughter.)

PAUL: Right, look at what **Berke Breathed** has done — I might have the Pulitzer now if I had just followed my instincts. (**Breathed's** strip, BLOOM COUNTY, won a Pulitzer prize last year.)

BOB: *So, when you started reading comics did you start drawing superhero comics, did you start drawing like Neal Adams?*

PAUL: Oh, I wish I had. Yeah, right away I was drawing "Nebula, the Stellar Man," this diamond-hard character who had all sorts of cosmic forces at his fingertips. Then I met another comics fan.

BOB: *That must have been nice.*

PAUL: It was via Marvelmania, the infamous Marvel fan club of the early '70s. This fellow who also lived in Bellevue, **Mike Main** — who is now a brilliant computer scientist at, I believe,

obscure comic, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY."

the University of Colorado, — wrote into the pen-pal section of Marvelmania's magazine. I wrote him and we got to know each other, and we decided immediately to put out a fanzine. He had been sent THE BUYER'S GUIDE, **Alan Light's** forerunner to COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE, because his name had appeared in the pen-pal column. So we learned of the existence of fanzines and immediately wanted to do one. Ours was called FREEFALL. It was a general comics fanzine, and Mike wrote so many articles he had to use pseudonyms so his name didn't appear too frequently. I did all of the artwork and wrote a column.

BOB: *About when was this, about how old were you?*

PAUL: Oh, junior high school, 13, 14, 15. Via THE BUYER'S GUIDE I started ordering fanzines, and I was soon more excited about fandom than I was about the actual comics I was reading. Science-fiction fans often differentiate themselves in this way, by calling themselves fanzine fans, and that's definitely what I was. One of the fanzines I bought was COMICS FANDOM MONTHLY, **Joe Brancatelli's** 'zine, and it listed apas. Apas (Amateur Press Alliances), for the benefit of our readers, work like this: There are, perhaps, 30 members. One member is the central mailer, and everybody prints up 30 copies of their own little fanzine each month, sends them to the central mailer, who staples them into 30 thick booklets containing one copy of each person's work, and sends them back out. So what you've got is a very close-knit, closed group that gets the same fanzine created by each other each month.

This sounded like the neatest thing I'd ever heard of, so I immediately joined APA-5, which was a Portland-based apa that **Mark Verheiden** — who later went on to write THE AMERICAN for Dark Horse Comics — originated and was central mailer for. APA-5 was a huge influence on my life. I wrote and drew and frankly, sought the approval of everybody. It was very systematized. There was an "egoboo poll" — egoboo being short for ego boost — where you'd vote for the best APAzine of that mailing, and I would try hard as I could to get on the egoboo poll. In this way I was moved to my first efforts at writing and drawing.

BOB: *I just saw an ad for Roy Thomas's ALTER-EGO, which is probably the oldest comic-book APA or fanzine.*

PAUL: Fanzine.

BOB: *And Roy Thomas was probably the first person to graduate from fandom to being a professional, so they are now reproducing the first several issues of it, the first five issues or something. Do you ever see yourself reprinting some of your earlier work?*

PAUL: *(Laughter.)* It's far too embarrassing. Oh, here's an interesting thing about APA-5: **Frank Miller** joined just a couple of months after I did. Frank was this volcano of creativity, he had so much energy and so many ideas. He couldn't really draw worth a damn back then. But I remember his first cover — this sort of set the tone for some of his later work — was a barbarian standing over a pile of dismembered bodies, holding up a bloodied sword and saying, "Better to rule in Hell than serve in Heaven!"

Portion of a collaboration by Paul or Frank Miller. From the cover of APA-5 (1975-76).

Roy Thomas' Alter Ego #10, 1969. Originated by Jerry G. Bails, PhD.

BOB: *So, did you try submitting anything to comics at that point?*

PAUL: Oh, no, I was just a kid.

BOB: *Well, Shooter was just a kid when he started at DC.*

PAUL: Well, **Jim Shooter** was a prodigy. The interesting thing is that a number of guys connected with Dark Horse Comics, my publisher, were in APA-5 at one time or another — **Mike Richardson** the publisher, **Randy Stradley** the editor, **Chris Warner** the artist, myself, **Mark Verheiden,** others. These friendships forged when I was a teenager and in my early 20s through APA-5 have had surprising effects on how my life has gone since then.

BOB: *Is it possible to get something published by Dark Horse if you haven't been in APA-5?*

PAUL: Sure. But you tend to call on your old friends when you have a project going, such as that first issue on DARK HORSE PRESENTS, and since so many of us wound up in the comics industry it's not illogical for this to happen. APA-5, I should mention, is still going, as far as I know.

BOB: *It's one of the legendary APAs. But then you went to art school...*

PAUL: I went to the Art Center College of Design. I had decided to be an illustrator. I didn't want to go into comics at that point. This was before the creators rights revolution and the higher salaries that came along with it. Comics wasn't a very appealing profession.

Artwork © 1975-76 Chadwick/Miller

© 1969 Roy Thomas/Captain Marvel © 1986 M.E.G., Inc.

"I wonder if that caused me to become an artist."

BOB: *Was it something you enjoyed and you wanted to steer away from it because that would spoil your enjoyment of it?*

PAUL: Well, I had become a fan of illustration, as I still am, and that sounded just as exciting but with a lot better pay. *(Laughter.)* It's more respectable, too. So I went to Art Center with that in mind. But my first term there I read an article by **David Negron,** who is a motion picture production illustrator. It was about his storyboarding for TORA TORA TORA, and his production paintings for FUNNY GIRL and DOCTOR DOOLITTLE, and I said, "This is for me. It's like doing comics but you get to work in the movies and you're paid great." So I had my eyes set on being a production illustrator and storyboarding for movies from my first term on, although I was strictly an illustration major and they tended to push you toward advertising and editorial illustration.

Art Center was still a very hard-nosed school when I went there. Earlier, I understand, a third of every class was eliminated each term, so people went around humming like live wires with tension, worried about getting cut. It wasn't nearly so strict when I was there, but there was still a great emphasis on discipline. It wasn't a "do your own thing" sort of art school. There were some really basic skills that they were teaching people. As I went through it it seemed to get looser and looser. I'm not certain I'd recommend it with the same vehemence as when I was first going there.

BOB: *You said that they were leading you towards advertising —*

PAUL: And editorial illustration, especially.

BOB: *Do you feel that that shows up in your work today, or do you go the other way with it because that was school and this is not?*

PAUL: I think it influenced my thinking. It certainly influenced my paintings when I do illustrations. But it's not as visible in my comic-book work because, I guess, I'm reverting to my enthusiasms of teenagerhood in my visual approach.

BOB: *As far as your visual approach goes, it doesn't* look *like a lot of comics. There's a different visual approach that I see in your work. I don't see the same kind of construction and the same kind of placement —*

PAUL: As far as musculature?

BOB: *No, I'm not talking about the content of the frame. I'm talking about the layout of the frames. You know, when you go into dream sequences things look different. Comic books are very storyboardy, you know . . . a lot of Marvel comics, a lot of DC comics, a lot of vanity press comics, they* look *like a comic book. I don't know, they all look the same because we're all looking at the same things. You understand what I'm saying?*

PAUL: *(Laughter.)* What are you asking me?

BOB: *I don't know. Take this panel where you've got the rocks —*

PAUL: This is issue #6 where Concrete's building a rock wall and in each of the rocks, or most of the rocks, there is an image of him doing something — it's a montage idea where I compressed a bunch of different events into these images within the framework of the rock wall. Yeah, that's directly out of my Art Center experience, in fact directly out of my experience with one teacher, **Barron Storey,** a brilliant illustrator. You can see his work in NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC occasionally. He made illustration seem an exciting intellectual adventure. He's a true avant-garde conceptualist who also has the draughtsmanship to back it up. He's been an influence on **Bill Sienkiewicz,** incidentally, in some of his love of obscuring the image,with splatter and suggesting information without really

STONE BY STONE... MOVEMENT BY MOVEMENT...
SO BY DEGREES DOES CONCRETE'S GREAT STRENGTH AND ENDURANCE TRANSLATE INTO PALPABLE BENEFITS FOR THE FARM.
AND AS HE WORKS, HE STARTS TO APPREHEND HOW THE PATRIARCH, ERIC MORECOMBE, MUST HAVE FELT AS HE FIRST CARVED OUT HIS HOMESTEAD...
NOT DESTROYING, SHAPING BUT ALSO ORDERING
SELECTING THE BEST...
FORMING A SYSTEM WHICH PERPETUATES ITSELF, YIELDS GOOD IN SUSTAINING ABUNDANCE.
MAKING THINGS... AND MAKING THINGS WORK... AND FINDING SATISFACTION IN IN THIS LIFE.
MAUKESN! HOLD UP!
THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT YOU TO SEE!
OH?

The "Rock Wall" sequence, Concrete #6.

"I was more excited about fandom than about the actual comics."

depicting something with clarity. I'm having a little trouble expressing this.

BOB: *I understand what you're saying. This is something you expressed in the Melissa Strangehands story (DARK HORSE PRESENTS #5), where she wanted to do a whole montage of Concrete and have him mostly out of panel.*

PAUL: Oh, the strange cropping where just his hand would be showing, that was her idea for a series of pictures. Yeah, I'd say that was very much a **Barron Storey** kind of concept.

BOB: *And I guess that's what I meant. That seems to me to be more of a design layout of the concepts of the story, rather than a storyboard sequence where you're telling the story in a very normal flow.*

PAUL: I think that sort of offbeat montage device, like the stone wall page, is just one of the small pleasures you can give people. It shouldn't interfere with the clarity of the story, though, on which I place a premium.

BOB: *Yeah, I've seen some design layouts where you're not sure which is the next panel to flow through.*

PAUL: Actually, I have pages like that myself, but I'm careful to make it so that it doesn't really matter which panel you go to next — it's not a crucial time sequence.

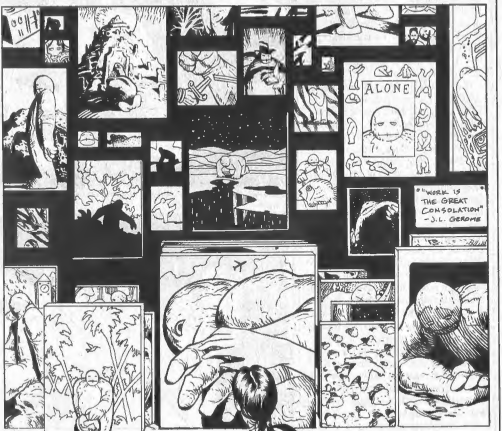
BOB: *Right; in the rock wall it didn't particularly matter in what order you looked at the images because it was just a series of events with Concrete.*

PAUL: Yes, it's several weeks of time, just showing the things he did to improve the farm, and you don't need to know the order in which he did them.

BOB: *So, did you graduate and then go into movies?*

PAUL: Actually, while I was still in school my movie career started. First, I art directed a student film called KEEP IN TOUCH. It was a romantic little story about a travel agent and a nurse who found love then lost it; autobiography on the part of the writer-director. It's interesting in one particular. The nurse's brother, who gave the travel agent a hard time, was **Jake Steinfeld,** who has now made a name for himself as a celebrity body trainer in Hollywood. He was **Harrison Ford's** trainer. He has this business called "Body By Jake", and you can see his three-minute snip on some cable network, where he's on the beach and he shows you some exercise you can do. At this time, he was still working as the Incredible Hulk in the Universal Studios tour, and he would come to the shootings with a little bit of green makeup here and there.

Anyway, because of KEEP IN TOUCH, I was recommended as a storyboarder to a team of brothers who were working on a film called REUNION WITH DEATH. It was set at a high school reunion. In it, a kidnapping/murder had happened when all of these people were in high school. It had never been solved, but it starts to unravel at this reunion as people start dying one by one, all connected with the original crime. A very plotty little mystery-thriller.



Melissa Strangeheads story page (Dark Horse Presents #5).

"Frank Miller was this volcano of creat-

BOB: *Was this produced?*

PAUL: It never got made; maybe it will someday. I storyboarded a whole lot of that for **Jim and Ken Wheat,** who went on to co-direct EWOKS: THE BATTLE FOR ENDOR, which was a TV movie a couple of years ago. They also brought me in on that project. One sequence shot for REUNION was inserted into another film they made, LIES. It's not too bad. Rent it at your video store and check out the huge credit they gave me. Anyway, the reason I was doing this before I was actually out of school was because I had been lured to drop out before graduating by another movie that never happened. This was called THE FAST ONE. It was to be a thriller about formula-one Grand Prix racing. A guy named **Stephen Dane,** who has since become a specialist in creating hardware for movies — he fabricated props for GHOSTBUSTERS and BLADERUNNER — brought me on to this film. We were all going to go to Europe for a couple of months and follow the formula-one Grand Prix circuit filming. I fell for it all and dropped out of school, then suddenly they didn't have the money to do it. So I was at loose ends when REUNION WITH DEATH came up. It was really the start of my storyboarding career.

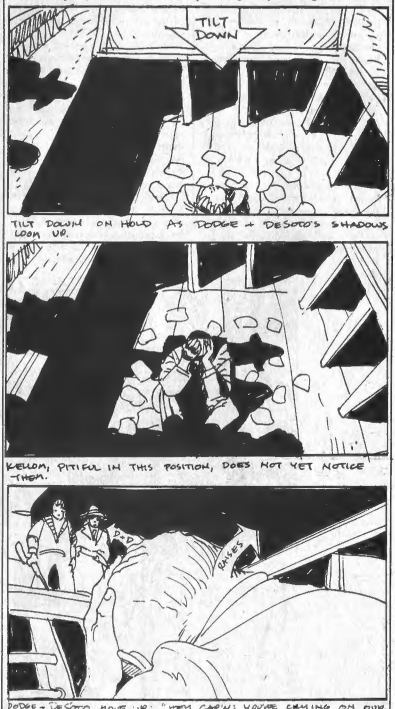
Later, I should mention, I went back to Art Center, got my degree, and one of my instructors there, **Kirk Axtell,** who was art director on RAGING BULL and some other films, hired me for a silly little **Mac Davis** comedy called CHEAPER TO KEEP HER. That was my first job out of school. I never saw it, actually. I storyboarded it and worked as Kirk's assistant, and I have one dreadfully guilty memory: Kirk had this incredibly expensive neon sign made for a retirement home that was in the film, and when the shooting was done they put it back in the art department, just the loose neon tubes sitting in the corner. They were afraid they would get broken there and they wanted to save them in case they had to reshoot at that location, so I was given the task of taking them up the stairs and putting them on the roof where they'd be safe, where no one would step on them. But when I tried to pick up those tubes they would break under their own weight, one by one, pop, pop, pop, $100 each pop. I think I got about 30% of them up to the roof intact. *(Laughter.)*

BOB: *Did they ever find out?*

PAUL: I guess they never needed to reshoot those scenes, but I sure felt guilty for costing them all of that money.

BOB: *When you were storyboarding, did you get to see the finished product, or was it just something you worked on and then you went on to something else?*

PAUL: Frequently that's the case, because you're doing storyboards before they shoot, and then the director's really too busy to meet with you because he's shooting all day and doing rehearsals and


TILT DOWN
TILT DOWN ON HOLD AS DODGE + DESOTO'S SHADOWS LOOM UP.
KELLOY, PITIFUL IN THIS POSITION, DOES NOT YET NOTICE THEM.
DODGE + DESOTO MOVE UP: "YEH CAPN'] YOU'RE COMING ON OUR FUTURE."
P.D.
DAVE'S

© 1986 King Road Productions

Three storyboard panels from the "end sequence" of THE BIG EASY (original title: Nothing But The Truth).

ivity. He couldn't draw worth a damn."

so on. So you're let go. But on a surprising number of my movies I've gotten to see them in progress.

BOB: *Do youever get to see them on the screen or on TV or whatever?*

PAUL: Oh, of course, of course. I think CHEAPER TO KEEP HER is the only thing I haven't seen, and that's because it got a one-day release and it's too bad a movie to be picked up by video stores. Sometimes I would be brought in on a movie very late in the game. One of the last films I did was THE BIG EASY, which came out last summer; for it I was brought on well into the shooting.

BOB: *Why did you come in late? Once the shooting has started, why would they need a storyboarder?*

PAUL: It was a real mystery to me until I got there and puzzled out the politics of the situation. **Jim McBride** was the director. He had done BREATHLESS before that, and he had some kind of reputation as an underground filmmaker in New York. He was under tremendous pressure to keep on schedule. I was brought in to storyboard this action-filled ending that hadn't really been thought about too much. I wonder if I was sort of a way to pressure **McBride,** or a compromise solution that would keep him from getting yanked from the picture or something. There were definitely some politics going on that I wasn't privy to. But what I did on that was storyboard the end sequence in the marina.

The reason I bring up THE BIG EASY is because you asked about my being there when they were shooting. Well, I was in the middle of shooting there and I got to go to dailies (as they call them), the film that's been shot a day or two before that's come back from the lab. There was a scene that involved some gruesome shotgun murders, and **Ellen Barkin's** character, (who is with the district attorney's office, she's not hardened like the cops) has to come in and look at all of this. Before the scene would start, she would stick her finger down her throat and cause a gag reflex, gulping, her eyes tearing. Take after take after take she did this. It was a great example of method acting, I guess.

BOB: *That would make for an interesting blooper reel, I imagine.*

PAUL: Yeah.

BOB: *But you didn't normally get to be on the set or see the rushes; was that an exception because you were brought in so late?*

PAUL: It was something of an exception, but there were other exceptions. I was on STRANGE BREW forever and a day, it seemed. I storyboarded it ahead of shooting and I was around while they were building most of the sets. I was an assistant to **David Snyder,** the production designer, and then I was brought back *after* it was shot, when they were doing a few retakes, as a sort of liaison for special effects. I bugged the matte painter and optical

More examples of Paul's film work (storyboards, again from THE BIG EASY).

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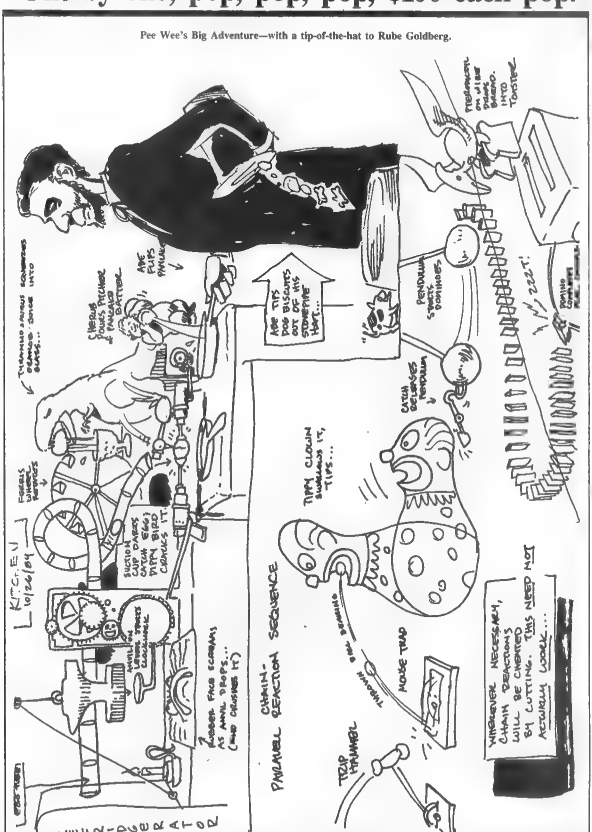
"One by one, pop, pop, pop, $100 each pop."

Pee Wee's Big Adventure—with a tip-of-the-hat to Rube Goldberg.


NEWTON-EQUERATION
CHAIN-PAINBEL REACTION SEQUENCE
TRAP THUMBEL
MOUSE TRAP
WITH SEVERE NECESSITY, CHAIN REACTIONS MAY BE PREVENTED BY CUTTING THIS NERD NOT ACTUALLY LOOKING...
TIPPY CLOWN SWALLOWS IT, TIPS...
OSCAR DECLINES PERSONAL SPRINKLES
PERSONAL SPRINKLES DISPENSED.
ABE TIPS HIS BISCUITS OFF OF HIS PERSONAL HAT...
ABE PUTS PANTS ON.
THOMAS ARTHUR SQUIRTING DEVICE... DRIVE INTO
ABE TIPS HIS BISCUITS OFF OF HIS PERSONAL HAT...
ABE PUTS PANTS ON.
THOMAS ARTHUR SQUIRTING DEVICE... DRIVE INTO

"Comics wasn't a very appealing profession."

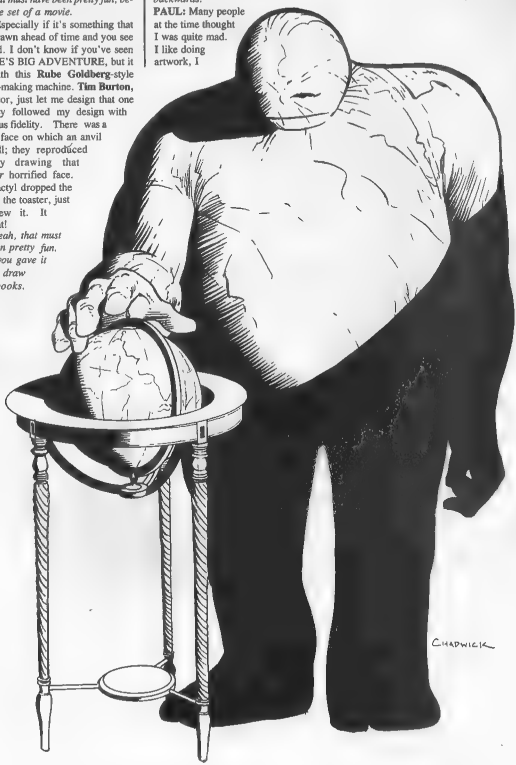
effects people to get their work done.

BOB: *That must have been pretty fun, being on the set of a movie.*

PAUL: Especially if it's something that you've drawn ahead of time and you see it realized. I don't know if you've seen PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE, but it opens with this **Rube Goldberg**-style breakfast-making machine. **Tim Burton,** the director, just let me design that one day. They followed my design with tremendous fidelity. There was a horrified face on which an anvil would fall; they reproduced from my drawing that *particular* horrified face. A terodactyl dropped the toast into the toaster, just as I drew it. It was great!

BOB: *Yeah, that must have been pretty fun. And so you gave it all up to draw funny books. That seems a little backwards.*

PAUL: Many people at the time thought I was quite mad. I like doing artwork, I



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"There were some politics going on that I wasn't privy to."

like drawing and painting, and I didn't really care to be a production designer because so much of that is administrative, knowing the technicalities of construction and working with budgets; and while you have a certain amount of final say over the look of the film, the artwork you produce is usually done under very harried conditions, or is just a means to an end. Storyboards are a means to an end; sketchy, fast drawings. I wanted to do some writing, and I also wanted to produce some artwork that had some value in itself, and create some things that were all mine, that weren't collaborative. This was right about the time that the creators' rights revolution was really in full flower. The Epic line had been created and Pacific Comics was still around and people were *owning* their characters.

I saw my friend **Ron Harris** preparing his presentation for CRASH RYAN, which later became an Epic comic. Ron, incidentally, is a former APA-5er, that's how I knew him. He also roomed with me when we went to Art Center, for a while, at the Golden Palm Apartments in Los Angeles, which was one of the most enjoyable artistic environments I've ever been a part of. It was right near Art Center, so there were a lot of artists living there. There were designers, photographers and illustrators, and it was a courtyard apartment so everyone could see each other's comings and goings. It led to a real sense of community. We were always talking art there. It was like a dormitory situation with all artists. Incidentally, part of LIES was shot at the Golden Palm.

BOB: *That's the second time you've mentioned a strong community sense. It's kind of interesting that Concrete has a community sense about him. You know, he wanted to help the family on their farm. He wants to be the adventurer but he doesn't try to be a superhero. He's more laid back than that.*

PAUL: He . . . although of course he is an alienated character by his nature, he isn't the lone wolf character that Batman is, say, who revels in that maverick role. No, he wants to be accepted and have like-minded people around him. I think human beings have lived for so long in tribal conditions that that's really the sanest way we *can* live.

BOB: *You mean in a community environment?*

PAUL: That sort of extended family where you've got roughly, I don't know, 50 to 200 people you know fairly well; big enough where if you have differences with your immediate family then you can find some sympathetic ears, but small enough so that it's not the faceless anonymity of the big city. I think that's the situation in which people are happiest.

One of many paintings Paul has done over the years—this is from 1982.

BOB: *And you're succeeding to a degree in translating that into CONCRETE, especially in the short stories that appear in DARK HORSE PRESENTS. CONCRETE's been very successful. You were nominated in six or seven categories — what was that, last year?*

PAUL: The Golden Apple Awards.

BOB: *Yeah, for 1987.*

PAUL: But I didn't win one of them! *(Laughter.)*

BOB: *Nobody else got that many nominations. That must be quite a head trip for you, a newcomer to the field, to be that noticed. Has that affected you?*

PAUL: It pleased me.

BOB: *Back to the penguin.*

PAUL: Yes. I still want to be proud of my cutout penguin. No, the critical reaction has been . . .

BOB: *Overwhelming?*

PAUL: Yes, it's been great. That's just

"He isn't the sort of lone wolf character Bat-

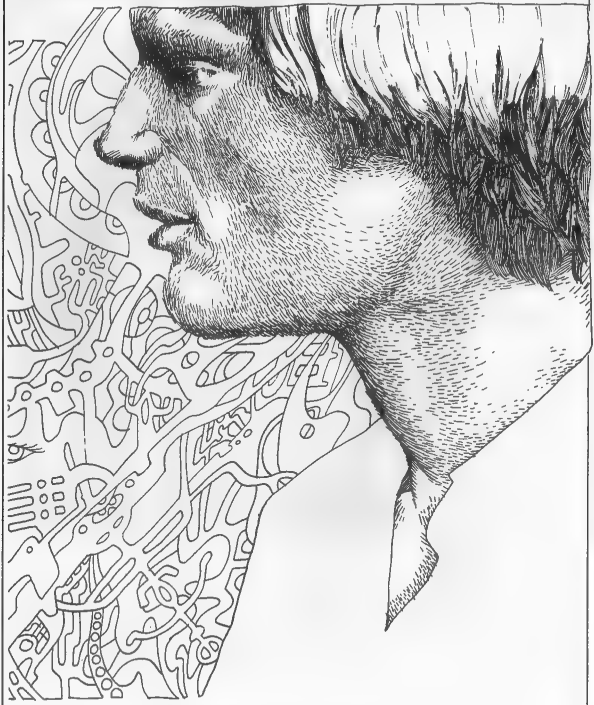
what I wanted in my heart of hearts.

BOB: *So . . . where were we, your fabulous career in movies?*

PAUL: We haven't even gotten to comics yet!

BOB: *That's all right. We don't have to talk about comics.*

PAUL: No, we were talking about my decision to go into comics. First, though, an aside about CRASH RYAN, which I think is one of the overlooked masterpieces of recent years — a great concept with wonderful characters, nicely executed. The concept was that all of those dream airplanes of the 1930s that made



Pen and ink illustration that Paul produced during his schooling at the Art Center.

man is, who revels in that maverick quality."

the Spruce Goose look like a piper cub were actually built. These flying things the size of the Titanic were going around housing their own air fleets and private air forces. It was a terrible love letter to Art Deco, Terry and the Pirates, Le Corbousier and early aviation.

BOB: *So, in reversing the great American dream you also moved from California to the East Coast. Why did you do that?*

PAUL: I had been doing some science-fiction paperback covers and it's my thought that I will eventually go back to that, because I do love painting. New York City is where all of those publishers are. My wife and I didn't want to live in the city — I'd gotten married in 1985 — so we decided to live in the country and get a big dog and rake leaves. But I can drive to New York, now.

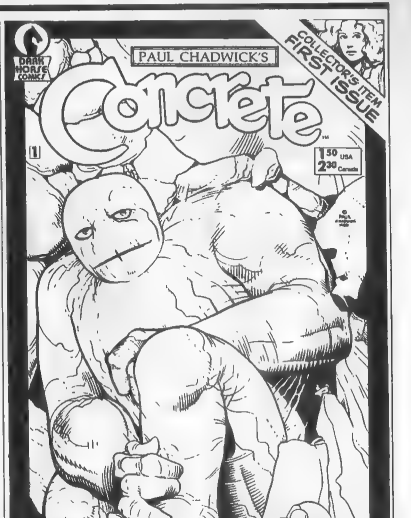
BOB: *What books did you do illustrations for?*

PAUL: I was lucky right off. My first cover was for a **Jack Vance** book — Vance continues to be my favorite author, at least in science fiction — an anthology called DUST OF FAR SUNS. I did a **Tanith Lee** novel called LYCANTHIA, two **Gordon Dickson** collections called MUTANTS and FORWARD!, a book by **Edward L. Byers** called THE LONG FORGETTING. And I did some covers for THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. I miss painting. I'd like to do more of it. I just don't have the time nowadays.

BOB: *So why Concrete? Why this rocklike creature?*

PAUL: *(Deep breath, long pause.)* I'm tempted to give a facetious answer. My friend **Barclay Shaw** says it's because I have an acutely controlled personality and I'm always trying to control myself and my environment, and Concrete is an expression of that: the ultimate thick skin. To a degree, he's right. I'll answer this way. I wrote this in the author's forum in the first issue and it's probably the best I'll ever express it, so I'm just going to read a short section:

"The originating spark for CONCRETE is peculiar and has only a little to do with its final execution. It goes back to a favorite falling-asleep fantasy from my bleaker days. As I lay in bed I imagined myself a semi-aware, rocklike entity lying on a mountain plain. Nothing could bother me. I could quietly observe the sun and stars wheel in the sky, be battered by rain and hail, all the time remaining serenely immune. Funny, but even as write this that vision of passive invulnerability is somehow inviting. Perhaps most significant, how could such



an entity feel the sting of failing in a responsibility, or the fear of taking a risk? The thought of being emotionally impervious as well as physically so brought comfort and somnolence."

That's a word I'd never use in casual conversation! But that really goes to show . . . I think **Edward Abbey** once said — let's see if I can get this right — "Whether you get an idea by looking at a sunset or by looking into a beehive, it has nothing to do with its value." Another favorite quote of mine is from **Victor Papanek**, who wrote DESIGN FOR THE REAL WORLD: "Ideas are cheap." They are. A rock man; big deal. It's the *execution* that counts. All of the little character details and the sensibility with which the stories are approached; I think that's where the value lies in CONCRETE. It's not in the idea.

BOB: *Right. You started out with a character that is essentially a gray Ben Grimm without the Fantastic Four. You took the same basic idea of the man of rock, but you have an entirely different character.*

PAUL: I dislike comparisons with Ben Grimm, but I guess it's in human nature to want to express things in a sort of shorthand. In Hollywood they talk of "high concept" where — and I see the rationale behind this — a movie should be able to be expressed in one sentence. The

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WYOMING TERRITORY

"I got a break drawing the Dazzler."

sense behind that is you can sell it to the public that way; it's very easy to advertise if it's "Honor student by day, booker by night." That was a "high concept" movie that New World — now owners of Marvel Comics — made a couple of years ago.

BOB: *ANGEL.*

PAUL: Right.

BOB: *I saw that; it's a great trash movie.* (Laughter.) *It was. But yeah, I see what you're saying, it's a mnemonic shorthand. But how do you explain CONCRETE in 30 seconds or less? You can't unless you resort to that kind of shorthand.*

PAUL: Actually I tried that once, at the San Diego con where I first passed around my presentation. What I came up with was that Concrete is a fellow named Ronald Lithgow, a thoughtful, intelligent speechwriter for a senator, who is encased in this concrete body and decides to become a writer for NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, mounting his own expeditions with just his body as equipment, and selling articles based on them. I don't know; I think that's better than "a gray Ben Grimm." But of course I'm uncomfortable with summing anything up so glibly.

BOB: *When you first showed it around, as we know, you didn't get much response.*

PAUL: Shall I go into that whole story?

BOB: *Yeah, if you'd like.*

PAUL: In 1983 I drew up the origin story (which later appeared in issue #3) and wrote character descriptions and plot synopses, a whole little presentation. I circulated it around to all the publishers. I got serious interest only from **Mike Gold,** then at First Comics, but because his letter arrived just before I left on a six-week trip to Nepal, I didn't answer it. When I'd gotten back and finally responded to all of the things he'd said, First was booked up with projects and not really interested in doing anything new. So what I wound up doing, in fact, was a lot more movie work and other illustration work. And I got a break pencilling for Marvel, drawing the Dazzler character for a year.

BOB: *When Archie Goodwin was writing it.*

PAUL: Right. Archie was revamping the character, making her into more of a superheroine and leaving some of the disco baggage behind. He had an interesting plotline going on with these people who had been working in a '60s free clinic in Haight-Ashbury who came upon a drug that gave people super powers. They started a Synanon-type cult where they were breeding the "new wave" of super-powered characters.

But DAZZLER got cancelled when the New Universe came along and Marvel wanted to free up some of its production capacity. I'd done it for a year and that was fine. That was enough for me. I went back to doing some more movie work, and finally turned my attention full-time to CONCRETE. But it really took the move to Connecticut to focus me, because I kept getting great movie offers I couldn't turn down. It just goes to show how powerfully your immediate environment affects your behavior. My 1986 presentation had three issues complete, ads and much other material. I had eight publishers interested then.

BOB: *You said you went to Nepal, let's get to that. Why did you go to Nepal?*

PAUL: One of the great adventures of my life. My friend **Bryn Barnard,** who is an Art Center-trained illustrator (and former Golden Palmer), was an exchange student in Southeast Asia when he was in high school. Later, he went back on a fellowship; he's a fellow of the Institute of Current World Affairs. (This is pretty tangential but it's kind of interesting: an heir to a plumbing fortune, **Charles Crane,** set up this organization to create a brain trust of people who were experts on foreign countries, because he saw how provincial America was in its thinking. Bryn's fellowship was in art and architecture of Southeast Asia. Crane also subsidized what I think is the most stunning series of paintings in the world:

Wash-drawing for T.V. Guide (N.B.C., 1984).

"Concrete is a thoughtful intelligent speech writer

Alphonse Mucha's gigantic canvases illustrating the Slav Epic.) So Bryn put together this trek through Nepal and invited me and some other illustrator friends along; also **Steve Starbuck,** a writer. We met in Bangkok and spent a few days there. Then we went on a 20-day trek in Nepal after a few days of getting permits in Kathmandu. It's physically the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I'm not athletic. I lost about 28 pounds on this trip, just sweating it off walking up and down these endless hills. It's very precipitous in the Himalaya because the monsoon drops huge amounts of water on it, and it's such a highly elevated upthrust of land — it's the highest place in the world, of course — where two continents are colliding. Also, it's fairly soft material. I think it's limestone. Consequently, these tremendous gorges get cut and you have these raging rivers between sheer mountain peeks. It's just walls going up and there's this little trail cut into it by hand.

BOB: *How long did you stay in the Far East?*

PAUL: It was about six weeks, total.

BOB: *Did you go near Everest at all?*

PAUL: No, we were quite a bit west of there. We went on the Annapurna Loop, as it's called. There are only a few peaks in the world that are over 8,000 meters, and mountaineers call them 8,000ers, and Annapurna is the one in that region.

BOB: *So you were there to observe art?*

PAUL: Oh, I was just there for a grand adventure. I did sketches. I had CONCRETE in my mind and came up with a number of stories while there, which only now are about to see print. One is in #8 and another is in DARK HORSE PRESENTS #22.

BOB: *Could you see yourself going back to Nepal, or going some other place?*

PAUL: We've got a trip planned into Indonesia and Malaysia this summer. If it works out, I'll be teaching an illustration seminar with Bryn there.

BOB: *That's kind of a plus of doing your own work and being successful, being able to say, "Let's go to Indonesia. A story about Indonesia would be fun."*

PAUL: The only trouble is you have to produce the pages and that takes a lot of time! Practically speaking, I haven't really the time to make this trip. But yes, this is the beauty of the free-lance life.

BOB: *Do you see CONCRETE becoming a Hollywood movie?*

PAUL: Of course I've fantasized about that many times. I think putting across the illusion of a rock man on screen for a long period of time would be difficult, but there was a rock character that was done pretty well in THE NEVERENDING STORY. Of course it was in a much more whimsical context so you could more easily forgive the parts that didn't come off. He was also onscreen for only a little while. When I think about it I imagine a story centered perhaps on Larry, where we don't get to see Concrete a lot. He might even function as a Nero Wolfe sort of character. Nero Wolfe is **Rex Stout's** fictional detective who is this enormously fat man who never leaves his office. His sidekick, who (believe it or not) is named Archie Goodwin, does all the legwork. A film might be able to tell a story about these characters handling it that way.

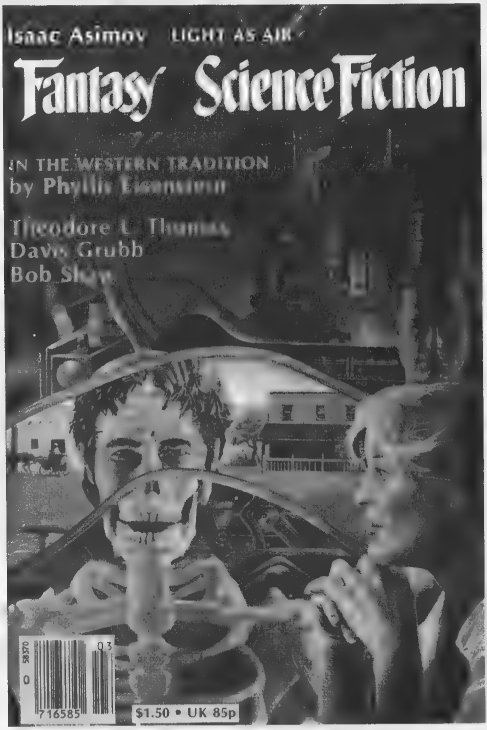
BOB: *Where do you see CONCRETE going, or is that too broad a question for you?*

PAUL: Well, it probably is. I try not to look too far. CONCRETE isn't the usual attenuated serial that comics tend to be these days. I don't mean to put that down because some of the best comics today are written that way, but CONCRETE happens to be fairly discrete stories that end in the issue they're told. I like the freedom of that, of not being committed to a big master plan. To answer your question, though, I'm toying with a number of ideas. I'd like to tell a story framed by Concrete sitting for a portrait by Melissa Strangehands. The right-hand pages would be a slow pull-back from the portrait, with their dialogue superimposed. The left hand pages would be flashbacks illustrating what their dialogue is referring to. It would be a character study of the two, talking to each other without really connecting, the left-hand pages telling unspoken truths.

I'm also developing a story in which Concrete learns his mother is dying. This could bring interesting complications, as he will want to say goodbye properly to a woman who doesn't know her only son wasn't killed on a camping trip a couple of years ago. He needs to do this without blowing his cover, or letting the government know what he's up to. I might have Larry arrested for breaking and entering. The idea still needs work.

Another notion that won't let go is an issue comprised of full-page panels, or of mostly full-page panels, without word balloons. The story would be told Prince Valiant style. I have recently become restless as an artist, wanting to let some of the intricate plotting and character detail I've been concentrating on recede a little

for a senator, encased in this concrete body."



Another cover painting, 1980.

bit, in favor of the razzle-dazzle graphics comics lend themselves to so well. Seeing the delightful first issue of ROACHMILL, with its poke-in-the-eye artwork (and relatively minimal plot) reminded me of the appeal of this mode of working.

Naturally, on this Southeast Asia trip, I'll have my eye out for story possibilities. I'm reminded of the writer's credo: all experiences, even miserable experiences, are research.

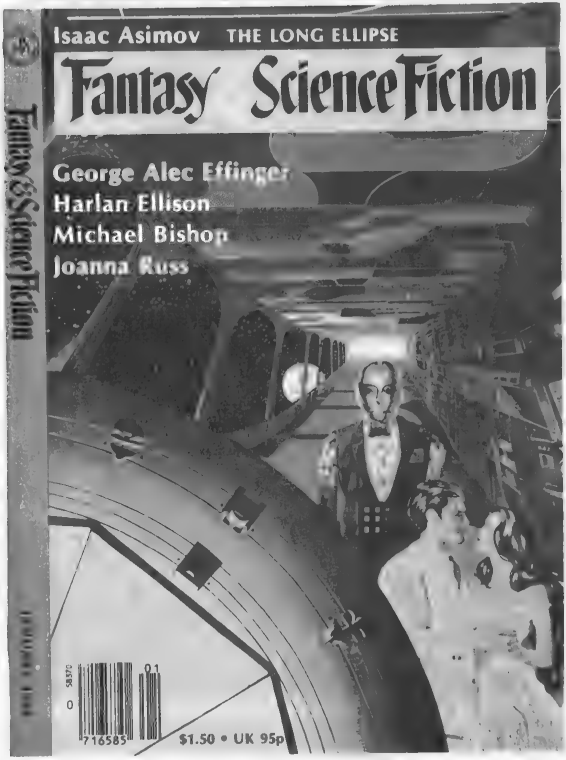
THE CHADWICK

A video box cover painting done for a movie

All art within this portfolio 1970-85 Paul Chadwick, unless otherwise noted

COLLECTION

"Illustrator Terry Robinson (and wife, Maggie) posed for this 1981 cover painting." Cover date January, 1982.

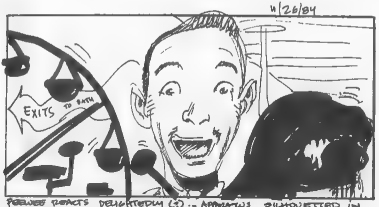


Chadwick: "I miss painting. . .I

"This started as a Tahiti travel ad (at Art Center). . .but I later made it a fantasy painting and had it printed on postcards."

just don't have the time nowadays."

Paul Chadwick
ILLUSTRATION



WE SEE PEEWEE FROM MIRROR'S P.O.V., A SOMEWHAT WIDE-ANGLE LENS.

Storyboards for Pee Wee's Big Adventure.

© 1987 Warner Brothers/Art. © 1985 Chadwick

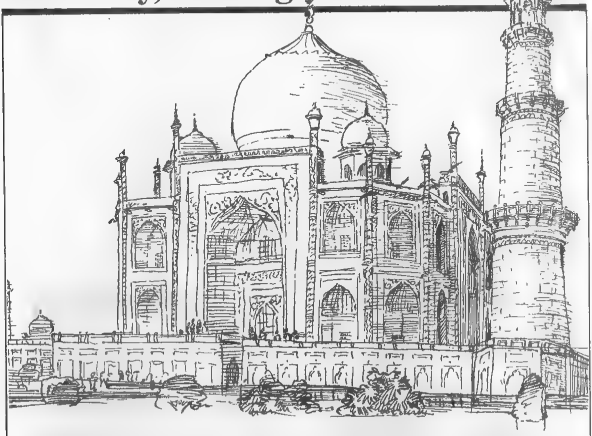
On his earlier works:

Miscellaneous covers and the like that Paul produced between 1974-76.

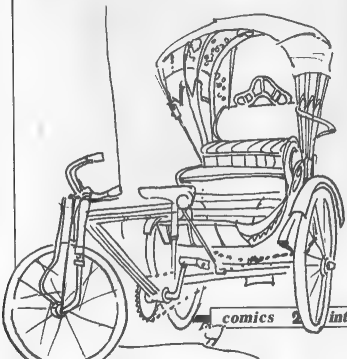
"It's far too embarrassing."

"That's Charles Royer, Mayor of Seattle. I was quite in the thrall of the 'editorial' sensibility of illustration taught at Art Center."

"I imagined myself a semi-aware rock-like entity, nothing could bother me."



Above: the Taj Mahal (pen sketch). Below: a "tri-shaw" (again, pen study), and, of course... Mr. Concrete (right). Thanx, Paul.



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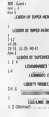

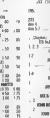

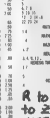

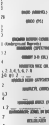

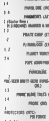

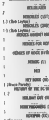

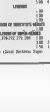

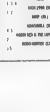

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- UPS — west of Mississippi, add $1.00 for formula above.
- COD via UPS, ignore all formulas — you will be charged exact shipping plus 50¢ handling charges. UPS COD will be cash only.
- For First Class $1.50 plus 35¢ per comic, overseas multiply by 2%.
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UPS COD 90% + & UPS orders pre-paid by M.O. go out within 24 hours.
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CATALOGUE PAGE 1 & 2

1st Price Per One/2nd Price For 3 Or More Of Same Issue. VF-NM Unless Noted - Complete Lists Accompany All Orders.

$30.00; If You Order $150.00 or More In 3's, No Further Minimums On Items Listed At $4.00 Or More (For One Price).

60'S MARVELS WHOLESALE (WHAT'S LEFT OF 'EM, ANYWAY)

Our sales on 12¢ Marvels (as well as DC's) have been remarkable in recent months. You're right that much of our wholesale supply of these books has sold out. Supplies of our remaining Marvel 12¢ Annuals, Specials & Giants we have taped the minimum wholesale price of a VF-NM 12¢ Marvel Superhero Comic to $2.00; VG-F $1.25. Some books, such as the first ten issues of a run (Capt. America 100-110) and comics featuring very popular artists (Ditko Dr. Strange in Strange Tales; Kirby Hulk in Tales to Astonish) have sold ridiculously well and have been priced accordingly. As before these are warehouse copies, 90% unread and we're not getting any more of them. When they're gone, they're gone.

INSTANT MARVEL SUPERHERO STOCK

(15¢ a book) - 5000 Marvels 1973-1985 VG or better, 80% unopened unread, 80% Superhero, 1-5 of a number. Alphanumeric order

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CATALOGUE PAGE A-2
Fantastic Four
Fantastic Four
Fantastic Four

"My brief careers at Marvel and DC had

MIKE RICHARDSON

Mike Richardson is, without a doubt, the tallest publisher in comics. That's the first thing one notices about him, and also the first thing I noticed seven or eight years ago when I first came into his Pegasus Books store in Beaverton, Oregon. Mike was (and is) soft-spoken but firm, and is extremely knowledgeable about the comic business.

Mike now has five Pegasus stores in the Oregon/Washington area, all of which are going strong in the urban market of Portland/Vancouver. I met Mike in 1985 upon my move to Portland, and have been an employee of his ever since. It was while working at the Beaverton and Portland stores that I first met Randy Stradley, and watched the genesis of Dark Horse.

Randy is also tall, with a bright red head of hair and a beard, and must really be met to be understood. Even this, his easygoing humor and playfulness can be

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Mike Richardson
Born: June 29, 1950
Residence: Portland, Oregon
Job: Too many! Publisher/Restaurateur/Retailer
Height: 6'8"
Shoe Size: 13
Education: BS in Art at Portland State University
Credits: Publisher of all Dark Horse Comics, writer or co-scripter of WACKY SQUIRREL, BORIS THE BEAR, THE MARK
Favorite Comics: Any Dark Horse Comics, NEXUS, LOVE & ROCKETS, Classic Barks, virtually everything done by Jack Kirby
Pet Peeve: "None. As an optimist, I don't dwell on Pet Peeves."
Personal Influences: "Lots of people but, basically, I believe in a lot of self-determination.
Favorite Sport: Basketball
Least Favorite Sport: Cliff-diving in Mexico, "but only because I haven't tried it yet."
Comic Influences: Jack Kirby! Steve Ditko, Alex Raymond, Hal Foster, and Harvey Kurtzman.
Favorite Films: SEA HAWKS, CITIZEN KANE, REAR WINDOW, THE QUIET MAN, LOCAL HERO, and RAISING ARIZONA among others in no particular order.
Favorite Sound Effect: Complete silence at this moment.
Most Bizarre Accomplishment: To be the subject of a COMICS INTERVIEW interview.

pretty much ended as far as I was concerned."

RANDY STRADLEY

disconcerting when compared to his professional attitude on the job.

Because of my close association with Mike and Randy, and my proximity to the Dark Horse offices, I have often been the person who covers Dark Horse for comics trade magazines. It's been both a pleasure and a learning experience to watch Dark Horse grow these last few years.

I helped promote DARK HORSE PRESENTS #1 and BORIS THE BEAR #1 at the 1986 San Diego Comic-Con when Dark Horse was just another fledgling black-and-white company struggling against the glut. While showing Dave Sim a copy of BORIS, I suddenly became the object of a stream of vitriolic spewing forth of hatred. Dave had mistaken me for the writer and/or artist of the book, and "how dare I do a parody of CEREBUS?" When I explained that I was merely promoting the books, he screamed "Just what we

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Randy Stradley
Born: Yes
Residence: Portland, Oregon
Height: 6'4"
Brand of Shampoo: Whatever's handy
Education: Had some
Credits: STAR WARS, NEW TALENT SHOWCASE, SUPERMAN, MINDWALK, BORIS THE BEAR, MECHA, THE MARK, and GODZILLA
Favorite Comics: CONCRETE, NEXUS, HELLBLAZER, ROACHMILL, and TUROK, SON OF STONE
Personal Influences: Elvis Costello, the original **KING KONG** film, APA-5
Least Favorite Thing About The Job: Replying to submissions
Favorite Thing About Job: Getting submissions
Favorite Non-Comic Activity: Eating
Favorite Films: KING KONG (1933), ERASERHEAD, ROAD WARRIOR, YOJIMBO and HARD TIMES
Person You'd Most Like To Be President: Rodney Dangerfield
Most Bizarre Accomplishment: Being blown into the air by an explosion during the filming of an amateur movie
Pet Peeve: Answering stupid questions like these

All material accompanying this interview at TM & © 1986 Dark Horse Comics, Inc., unless otherwise noted

"Most of our creators worked in relative

*need! Another F*CKING bureaucrat!"*

*Well, Dave, I've watched Dark Horse grow into quite a respectable and award-winning line under Mike and Randy's capable hands. Although I somehow got the nickname around the offices as "the young upstart," I'm glad to have been a "f*cking bureaucrat" in helping Dark Horse start out. And I hope I'll be here to watch Dark Horse continue growing long after you're done doing parodies of other books in CEREBUS!*

ANDY MANGELS: *Mike, Dark Horse Comics started just a few years ago and has quickly risen to become one of the best selling and best regarded independent comics companies. How did Dark Horse begin?*

MIKE RICHARDSON: Well, I have a background in retailing, and I met Randy through APA-5 and we had a lot of discussions on comics and comic-book philosophy. We enjoyed comics but we didn't like what we could see going on in the industry, and I had talked to certain people about someday becoming involved in an outside project — in other words a comic book — and Randy shared my enthusiasm for that particular project. Randy had gotten me involved in APA-5, which is a self-published — what do you call it?

RANDY STRADLEY: Amateur press alliance, where you write a letter to 35 different people.

MIKE: Everybody publishes their own part of it and mails it in to a central mailer who puts the whole thing together. APA-5 has a *history* of professionals coming out of it, people like **Chris Warner, Frank Miller, Paul Chadwick, Mark Verheiden, Mark Badger,** us. *(Laughter.)* On the bottom of that list, obviously.

RANDY: So a lot of the Dark Horse professionals were from APA-5.

MIKE: Originally we contacted them through APA-5. First we had to sell them on the fact that we had a vision of where we were going to go with our company. The first idea was just to do an issue called DARK HORSE PRESENTS, and that was well received in the market and everything took off from there. We were surprised

From THE AMERICAN #6, created by ALIENS writer Mark Verheiden (art: Grant Miehm).

The American TM & © 1988 Mark Verheiden

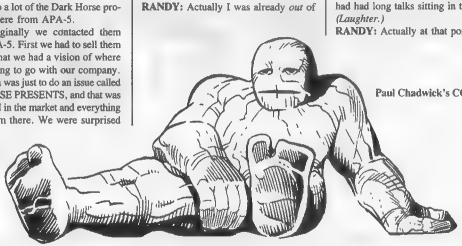
to see how many creators liked working for a company that didn't have the big company mentality. We have always worked with our creators, we think of ourselves *as* a creative company, and every relationship that we have we are proud of.

ANDY: *Randy, you had worked for DC Comics but were basically new to the industry when Mike contacted you about Dark Horse.*

RANDY: Actually I was already *out* of the industry essentially, my brief careers at Marvel and DC had already pretty much ended as far as I was concerned. I was not overly thrilled with the results of the relationship. I was working at THE L.A. TIMES and wondering how much longer I could stand living in L.A. when Mike called and said, "I think the time's right, I'm ready to start publishing, how would you like to edit a comic?"

MIKE: We had discussed it before. We had had long talks sitting in the hot tub. *(Laughter.)*

RANDY: Actually at that point most of



Paul Chadwick's CONCRETE.

Concrete © 1988 Paul Chadwick

obscurity until we began publishing them."

the discussions had been over the phone, just somehow Mike was always in Portland and I was always in New Jersey or Los Angeles or someplace. But it seemed like the perfect time, things were coming together —

MIKE: And we share a philosophy, too, on comics.

RANDY: Probably combined we've been reading comics for over 50 years, and we were feeling like we'd seen it all before and wanted to see something new.

MIKE: And wanted to put some *fun* back in comic books. So much of the comic-book work being done today is artists deriving from artists who were derivative of artists who were derivative of artists, and writers who continue to write the same stories that have been written for a long time now. We saw a real lack of freshness. Of course there are exceptions, and we're not trying to put down any particular company or anything, but we had just seen too much of what had become cliched and worn out. We were real tired of it, and we decided to go get creators that were interested in trying to do something a little bit different than the formula.

ANDY: *Right. DARK HORSE PRESENTS was fairly unique, there wasn't a traditional superhero or even a traditional adventure. The one most people think of is CONCRETE. How did you . . . you say you —*

RANDY: We were lucky because we had already seen CONCRETE, Paul had been sort of halfheartedly shopping the character around for a couple of years, and I had known Paul for awhile through APA-5 and personally as well. I talked to him about doing a couple of eight-page stories for DARK HORSE PRESENTS and he was interested in doing it. At that time he had just finished his run on DAZZLER with the book being cancelled. He also did a story for that first issue called "Brighter," which was his take on all of the things that they *hadn't* been able to do in DAZZLER. And **Chris Warner**, of course, we've known him for awhile, he was out of APA-5.

MIKE: Of course he had worked on ALIEN LEGION.

RANDY: ALIEN LEGION, DOCTOR STRANGE, MOON KNIGHT, BATMAN. But we knew he was a talented writer as well as an artist. Nobody had given him the chance to do anything except draw, and he was anxious to tell some stories of his own.

MIKE: He was anxious to create his own package, and he was anxious to work without a lot of interference in what he was trying to do. That's one of the biggest things we offer the people we work with, or that are willing to work with us, is that we give them greater control. We don't come in and say we think there should be this many action pages or they should concentrate on this character, and that's as it should be. We have a philosophy that when creators are allowed to work on something they really care about, something that means something to them, they do their best work, and so far in our case that seems to have worked pretty much across the board. Most of our creators have worked in relative obscurity until we began publishing these projects of theirs. Chris said he's gotten more comments on THE MARK than he did on anything he worked on for **Marvel** or **DC**.

RANDY: Like **Mark Nelson** struggled for years and wanted to do serious work, and he was sort of pegged as the artist who did CLONE ZONE and the only work he'd get offered was funny animal jobs for the most part. Since we *announced* ALIENS he's been contacted by every other company in the industry wanting him to do something for them.

MIKE: It's the same with **Mark Verheiden** and **Paul Chadwick**. The minute I saw CONCRETE — and

Cover detail from THE MARK (art by **Robert Caracol**).

"We usually bow to the creator's will."

WELL, JOSEPH HAS HIS PHILOSOPHY AND I HAVE MINE.
BRAAT-TAT-TAT
GOSH, I LOOK GOOD IN BLACK!
THEN THE STRANGEST THING HAPPENED. ONE OF THE JOES BROKE THROUGH OUR PERIMETER AND I RECOGNIZED HIS FACE!
DAVID LETTERMAN?
REALLY! THE RESEMBLANCE WAS UNCANNY!
Boris the Bear © 1988 James Dean Smith

BORIS THE BEAR does what he knows best — Braat - Tat - Tat!

originally I didn't know Paul, Randy did, but I had talked to Paul through Randy a lot — I knew that was what we had to have to start the company because it was the epitome of *everything* we wanted in a comic book. CONCRETE was perfect to stand for the type of book that we were looking for. We wanted it — this sounds like a joke — to stand as sort of the cornerstone of the whole company.

ANDY: *And once CONCRETE started coming out other companies —*

MIKE: Sure. After it appeared in DARK HORSE PRESENTS all of a sudden every company wanted it, so we ended up in a bidding war with seven companies to get it. Of course Paul ended up going with us.

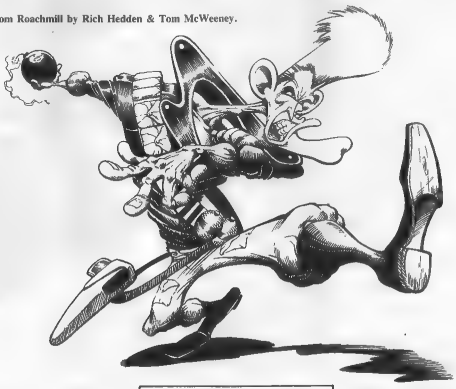
ANDY: *Was that because you had given the best offer financially, or the best offer creatively —*

MIKE: I think that we may have been just even on the money but with a little more creative freedom.

RANDY: Plus I think that Paul, after we had talked so much, felt comfortable with our goals as a company. He shared a lot of those ideals.

ANDY: *What's the Dark Horse difference between creative freedom towards, like, non-editorial interference? Like there's*

Zoolou from Roachmill by Rich Hedden & Tom McWeeney.



Zoolou from Roachmill TM & © 1988 Rich Hedden & Tom McWeeney

"I don't rule with an iron hand by any means."

non-editorial interferences in "we won't do anything" or in —

MIKE: No, no —

RANDY: I *hope* that we don't interfere editorially. Once in awhile something will come up where I'll just like, "Can't you find a better word than this," simply to avoid offending people needlessly. If not then we usually bow to the creator's will. Once we had a situation where one creator wanted to include racial slurs in something as a joke, which we totally vetoed, and in our contract that was our right. For the most part we never have to worry about these things. I mean the people come to us with an idea of what they want, before the first issue is ever published we have a good idea of what they're going to do, it's pretty much creative freedom and no editorial interference. I'll make suggestions once in awhile, but I don't rule with an iron hand by any means.

MIKE: Not only that, one of the big differences, as Randy said, I don't think there's very many cases where we would step in and say this can't be done; just that one about the racial slurs, and that person no longer works for Dark Horse so it's all in the past. Anyway, one of the things that we do is we get real involved with every book that we pick up. We get very involved with the day-to-day production of the book, we constantly talk to the creators and we discuss ideas with them. Because of that we're right in sync with what the creators are doing with their characters, in their books.

ANDY: *Does that necessarily mean that you are a fan of every one of the books?*

MIKE: Our company philosophy — and it's only broke down in a couple of areas — is we only print the books that we like. We have turned down books that are sellers, big sellers.

RANDY: Guaranteed.

MIKE: Yeah, they're guaranteed money-makers and we've turned them down. Sometimes it's a hard decision to turn them down, because we all want to make money. But we want — especially myself — to be able to sit down and look at our line and say we haven't lost the original idea of what we're trying to do. If it's something outside of that idea we don't want to plug it into our line. We don't want to compete with Marvel, who can do Marvel better than Marvel does?

RANDY: Maybe DC. *(Laughter.)*

MIKE: Those companies do what they do best. We have no intention of trying to be like them, we're trying to do something different. And sure, there are certain types of projects that we would do that would maybe fall into the same type of project that they would do, but for the most part we want to keep our line looking different. I think in the last six months Dark Horse has really established a *look* to its line, like now people pretty much know the type of material they can expect from us.

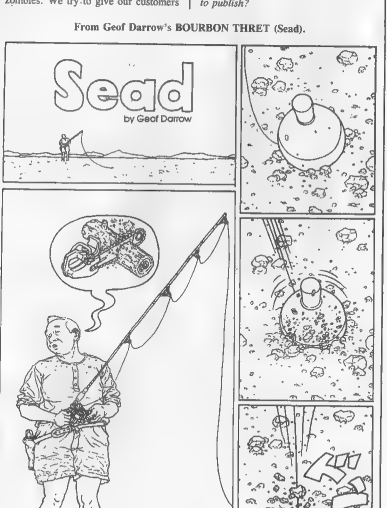
ANDY: *Well, because of that look do you think you'll get a Dark Horse zombie approach to your books?*

MIKE: I don't believe so.

RANDY: Any company gets fans. See, everybody talks about the Marvel zombie, but Marvel must have done something right for those people, they must give the people that buy their books some kind of reward, or they wouldn't be Marvel zombies. We try to give our customers something so they'll pick up Dark Horse books, we've been told by people that they pick up all of the Dark Horse books. Is that because they really enjoy what we're doing or is that because they've become a Dark Horse zombie? We feel it's because they like what we're doing. We try to aim our books at an audience that appreciates a story and nice artwork. Our books we think are different than most others. The nice line that we think we walk is we combine a quality of product plus a nice edge that makes the books marketable.

ANDY: *Does your opinion sometimes differ from Mike's in terms of books you want to publish?*

From Geof Darrow's **BOURBON THRET (Sead).**



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"No messin' around, just violence and slaughter."

RANDY: Once in awhile we'll butt heads over things, but essentially our philosophy is if we can't both agree on it then there must be something wrong with it. I mean *not* something wrong with the book, but it's going to cause problems somewhere down the line. The few times we've strayed from total agreement have resulted in problems, again not necessarily with the content of the book, but sales or we end up in a situation where we say, "Hm, we may have been better off not doing this."

ANDY: *Do you have any examples you want to give?*

MIKE: No, nothing specific. Basically —

RANDY: It wasn't the fault of the creators of the books themselves, it may actually have been the fact that together as a company we weren't wholly behind it.

MIKE: Basically I can only think of one real example that we had, where we felt an obligation to do a certain book and we went ahead and did it because of the obligation, not because we wanted to do the book. That was a nice learning experience for me. And that's a nice thing that *we* have over the big companies, is that Randy and I can sit down and become personally involved in the books we publish, and so we can really *care* about them. When you have 50 titles you have so many editors and artists and writers, how can you have that same control of the product?

RANDY: I talked with the people on one of the books that we picked up that had formerly been published by another company, they were *amazed* that we actually call them, that we send them sample copies of their own work when it's printed, that we advertise the book. From this other company they got *two* calls from the editor in a year. I can't imagine working like that. There's probably not a week that goes by that we don't end up talking to everybody that we're working with.

MIKE: It's necessary. If nothing else I feel like my job is #1 that the creators aren't having any problems, #2 that they know we're behind them. That's the most important thing I can do, I guess.

ANDY: *You talked before about Dark Horse's commitment to artistic integrity or difference from other company lines, however your first or second book, depending on how you look at it, was a parody of what was happening at the time in comics, BORIS THE BEAR. What was the story behind that?*

MIKE: Well . . . actually now there've been so many characters like that, but Boris was actually a pretty original concept at the time. Basically what happened is I went into the warehouse at Second Genesis one day and was talking to **Richard Finn,** and while we were standing there his crew was putting out a number of books that were adjective adjective adjective noun books, something like *six* of them that they placed on the stand right in front of me. So I happened in an offhand manner to say, "You know, somebody ought to create a character to get rid of all of these things and clean up the whole comic-book business." And Richard said, "Yeah, that's a great idea." So we laughed about it, made a few jokes, and I hopped in my car and was driving back to the store, and on the way I started thinking about it, and when I walked in Randy was standing behind the counter and I said, "Randy, I want to do a book with a funny animal type character and slaughter all of the other characters, all of these things, in the worst most *violent* way possible. No messin' around, just violence and slaughter." And I guess there's a little background behind this, too. Also being in a retail store we stood there and watched people *complain* about these books.

RANDY: As they were buying them. *(Laughter.)*

MIKE: Day after day. Anyway, I basically had this story plotted out in my head, and Randy and I were sitting there figuring out what exactly to do, talking about artists. Well, we knew an artist —

RANDY: First we discussed, you know, maybe we should try to contact **Keith Giffen** —

MIKE: 'Cause he was doing AMBUSH BUG at the time. Or we thought maybe

Thirty-two years after his (film) birth, GODZILLA moves to Dark Horse Comics — look out Raymond Burr!

Godzilla® & © 1989 Toho Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. Godzilla is a registered trademark of Toho Co., Ltd. Used by permission.

"Everybody talks about the Marvel zombie,

Six panels from BOB THE ALIEN (written & drawn by Rick Rice).

Chris Warner could have time to do it. But there was a person who aspired to be a comic-book artist that we knew of, and he hadn't done any work yet, and he had some drawing of a bear that had been running in APA-5, **James Dean Smith**. So we thought that the bear would be a nice way to do it, so we thought, *"Hey*, let's give him a chance!" So I contacted him and had him come in, and I think he was delivering pizzas or something at the time, and I told him to quit his job and I would guarantee him so much money if he would do this book we were going to be working on. So basically we made an agreement that we would write the stories and supply them, and he would draw them, and the result was BORIS THE BEAR. So at that time BORIS took off, which was the most wonderful thing and a curse at the same time. It came out in the middle of the funny animal glut.

RANDY: The day BORIS #1 hit the stands there were ten of the mutant animal books hitting the stands that same day, and they all were put out on the shelf at the same time.

MIKE: And BORIS stood out from the whole thing. We did a nice parody cover off of the ELEKTRA book, and BORIS sales took off. The problem is that even though we had been working on DARK HORSE for over a year, because of BORIS we were immediately identified as *part* of the glut. We never had any intention of cashing in on the glut.

RANDY: Actually BORIS was originally intended as a one-shot and the response to the first issue was so good we thought we'd do a couple more. I took Jim out to lunch and used CEREBUS as an example, I said, "Look, let's continue with this, let's comment on the market, and let's go parody for the first twelve issues or so and then we'll go some other way." Jim never wanted BORIS to be parody, he wanted it to be a straight adventure series, and he had ideas for Boris having adventures, Boris fighting terrorists, that kind of thing.

MIKE: A straight adventure strip, which

Michael T. Gilbert strikes back with MR. MONSTER (II?) — "Who loves ya, baby?"

Bob The Alien TM & ... 1988 Rich Rice

but Marvel must have done something right."

we really didn't see as something we wanted. Our agreement with Jim was that he could use the bear and we would write the stories, but he could use the character. In retrospect Boris was probably the perfect character for what we tried to do, a bloodthirsty teddy bear just worked well.

ANDY: *But BORIS then later became a curse, you said. Besides labelling Dark Horse as part of the comics glut, how was it a curse?*

MIKE: Well, things just didn't work out. At some point Jim decided he wanted to be a creator instead of the artist, and that was never the agreement, and unfortunately things didn't work out and we parted our ways. Jim was unhappy. Jim did very well by Dark Horse and it's too bad that he had to leave. But one of his main problems was that he didn't want to do parody anymore, but he's still using the same ideas that we handed him.

ANDY: *You also experimented for awhile — I don't know if this is the result of trying to fight that image of being part of the glut — you experimented with color for awhile. What brought that about? Why did it not work?*

RANDY: Well, we had always wanted to do color books and we have plans for *more* color books coming up in the next year. Somehow the two color books we started with just never got going. We had problems getting the books completed, we weren't really prepared for the extra six to seven weeks that color adds to a schedule with adding color then separations then extra time with printing. We'll do better next time, we just weren't prepared. Both those books, MECHA and THE MARK, are continuing in black-and-white now and hopefully will be able to maintain a regular schedule, but we will have new color books.

MIKE: We don't want to be a black-and-white company or a color company or anything, we're just a comic company. Some of our books will always be black-and-white, some of our books will always be color. The reason we stopped doing the BORIS THE BEAR color books was, of course, our agreement with Jim came to an end, plus sales had fallen off so drastically on them. On THE MARK and MECHA it was more production problems than anything else — plus **Harrison Fong,** the artist for MECHA, broke his arm.

RANDY: After completing pencils for issue #3 he broke his wrist in a motorcycle accident, so there was a month and a half there where nothing was done.

MIKE: And the artist on THE MARK was a month late for the first issue, two to three months late on the second issue —

RANDY: Six or seven months late on the third issue.

MIKE: So we just decided we needed to get these books coming out on a regular basis. We just wanted to get them out. We're going right back to color. We'll be doing PREDATOR, which was licensed from 20th Century Fox, a four-issue color book by **Mark Verheiden** and **Chris Warner.** We'll also be doing a four-issue **Roy Thomas — Robert E. Howard** book in color, CORMAC. There's a CONCRETE COLOR SPECIAL that we will have coming out.

ANDY: *You brought up something that was a question of mine, several of the artists who have been working for you have not been able to keep to a consistent schedule. They* have *kept consistent schedules for, for instance, Marvel. Why do you think they can't keep a schedule for you but can if it's Marvel or DC?*

MIKE: There's a couple of reasons I think. Some of the people we know for a *fact* have said for so long that if only they could have complete freedom they could do what they really want, but give them that complete freedom and then

One of the many "unsung" talents at Dark Horse Comics: Production Manager CHRIS CHALENOR.

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"Mike and I are the company, we created it."

Flaming Carrot TM & © 1995 Bob Burden

they're on the spot to do something massive and great. Basically it's people trying to do their best job. Because *we* set ship dates and because *we* get heat because the books don't come out, we're under some pressure to go back to our creators and say, "Look, we gotta get this book out." But when they walk in with this beautiful stuff it's hard for us to say, "Gee, this isn't working." So basically what we do is we try to find some balance where we let them have as much time as they need and at the same time keep the distributors happy. It's a fine line to walk.

RANDY: The *other* aspect to that is most of the books we publish are creator owned. **Paul Chadwick**'s never been late on an issue of CONCRETE, but if he was what could we do, we can't very well fire Paul off of the book. *(Laughter.)* And we wouldn't want to, but it's impossible to do. You can't go to someone else and say, "Give me a CONCRETE story." It's not going to be CONCRETE.

MIKE: At another company if the artist is not getting the book in they fire the artist and get somebody else. It's not possible for us to do that, and we wouldn't want to.

ANDY: *In a couple of situations you have replaced artists, though.*

RANDY: Those are on company owned books, and those are only as last resort. We try to give everybody the benefit of the doubt, every opportunity to get the work in.

MIKE: The two times we've actually replaced artists, one time the third issue was seven months late, and in the other case it was a licensed product and it was three months beyond our original ship date and the licensor was wondering what the heck was going on. The stuff we had was *great*, those guys were talented, but they just weren't getting it in. But I guess we're as flexible as anyone is. We have certain constraints we have to live under, so within those we'll be as flexible as we can.

ANDY: *What are the differences between creator owned and company owned at Dark Horse, and which books are which?*

MIKE: Company owned are books that Randy and I develop. We usually sit down and talk about concepts and if we decide we have one worth doing, that's a company owned book. Basically Randy and I create it.

RANDY: Mike and I are the company, we created it, and I guess you could say that they're books that *we* own. In the same way that **Mark Verheiden** is the creator of THE AMERICAN and owns that book, that book has had and will have a variety of different artists on it, the artists on that book are hired essentially on a work for hire basis. Mark is the owner, we act as his go-between essentially.

You can't keep a good carrot down; FLAMING CARROT is back! All from creator, writer, and artist Bob Burden.

MIKE: Yeah. There's a point that needs to be made here, too. When we say a company owned book, Dark Horse never has and never will take any creation by anyone else and become the owner of that creation like other companies do. Anything that *ever* is created by someone else, that person *owns* that property. When I say a company owned book it's that Randy and I have created it ourselves. We don't hire anybody to create it, we don't take over someone else's creation. We've got lots of ideas, things we'd like to see.

ANDY: *Besides company owned and creator owned you've also got some licensed products. How do you go about that?*

MIKE: Well, ALIENS was basically my idea, GODZILLA I'd *like* to say was mine but it was only because Randy used to walk around putting Japanese 'toons in front of me with his arms out, acting like he was stomping on cities. *(Laughter.)* And I said, "Hm, let's do GODZILLA." And PREDATOR, Randy and I went and saw PREDATOR together and thought it was pretty hot, so we're going to do it. **Mark Verheiden** will be writing it, but it'll be a different approach, more action. If something looks good — TERMINATOR was one that we went after and Now Comics ended up getting it because we went on to other things and never got around to getting involved with it.

ANDY: *Do you plan on doing more licensed books?*

MIKE: Yeah. Any time something looks good that we really like, we'll go ahead and go for it. We have a number of things

"We think of ourselves as a creative company."

that we've been working on for quite some time, some of them may come through and some may not. We can only handle so many at a time. We've got a number of them in progress or being negotiated. We don't want to become an all licensed company, we want a nice combination.

ANDY: *But in a sense your creator owned books are licensed from the creators.*

MIKE: That's true, but I look at that differently, a creator is creating a new package. CONCRETE was a new package, whereas GODZILLA everyone recognized, the public knows what it is. We would have to sell CONCRETE to the public.

RANDY: We've already gotten letters from people who picked up ALIENS and saw the ads for the other Dark Horse books, and on the strength of how much they enjoyed ALIENS decided to try the other Dark Horse books, and say they love the whole line or liked all of the books they've tried so far.

MIKE: And everybody knows ALIENS, everybody has some idea of it. ALIENS has also opened a lot of doors for us in merchandising, we're working on a number of things right now. And not only that, we're being *swamped* with offers from people who want us to adapt their products into comics. So all it takes is one recognized success. Well, what I mean is it takes something that has public recognition being done reasonably well.

ANDY: *For instance you're comparing say GODZILLA at Marvel to GODZILLA at Dark Horse.*

MIKE: I don't remember saying that. *(Laughter.)* I don't want to compare our GODZILLA to Marvel. They did what they do, we just took a different approach. I'm not saying ours in any better or any worse, we just like our approach. I'm sure they like their approach.

ANDY: *Are you experiencing, because you're expanding so much, growing pains? How much do you expect to expand?*

MIKE: Well, in the last six months we've roughly doubled our line, moved into a new building, bought new equipment, hired new people — we've been experiencing growing pains. But if we're going to survive and succeed it's all part of the deal. We just have to make sure that we don't lose sight of the originally intended idea of what type of books we want to publish, not get carried away by all of the other stuff, have that same involvement with all of our projects.

RANDY: We get *tons* of submissions and we've seen a lot of bad stuff and a lot of good stuff.

MIKE: A lot of bad stuff and some good stuff. *(Laughter.)*

RANDY: Well, lately there's been a lot of good stuff, and it's *frustrating* to see such good stuff and know that we simply don't have the time to deal with it or give it the exposure that it needs. We're having to expand real carefully.

MIKE: For the last three months I think the quality of our submissions has been rising, now we have quality people sending us submissions and not just people who are having a hard time getting work. In the first couple of years of our existence — the first year I should say — basically all of the people we employed were people that we went after and contacted. Now we get creators contacting us wanting to do some work for us, so that's a nice change

ANDY: *Do you ever see a time when the company will be so big that you will not be able to do something, like you'll have to hire other editors besides Randy?*

MIKE: Well, again, we'll never ever print a book we're not involved in. My feeling is that any book that we publish we want to be something that we like personally. We're at the time right now where we're talking about hiring another assistant editor, but we don't want to lose sight of how the company started, what our thoughts were. We will decide whether we pick up a project or not. We have *more* than enough projects right now, several assistant editors.

RANDY: Yeah. If we have the staff in place, a trained staff, chances are we'd do quite a number of other projects that we've looked at and want to do. But we're having to be real careful about what we do. We've experienced setbacks in the past from trying to expand too fast or —

MIKE: Not having it all thought out.

RANDY: Or bringing in staff that wasn't properly trained. Always in those cases we've had to take a step back and reassess what we're doing. I think slow and sure is what's going to win the race, not just peppering the market with everything we can get our hands on.

ANDY: *You started out being known for getting books out on time, then for awhile you weren't getting books out on time, and now they're pretty much out on time. How is your schedule going to look in the future?*

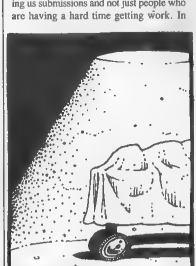
MIKE: Actually we've almost caught everything back up. One day I called a meeting and got everybody in and put this big list on the wall and said let's start getting this stuff done, and since then we've kept all of our books on time that were on time and have made up time on the others — it's not as easy as you might think because it's hard to get creators to produce on a real tight schedule. So we've tried to do it in the schedule with the philosophy of what needs done the most.

RANDY: Yeah.

ANDY: *You've also made a change lately in your paper stock.*

RANDY: We have switched printers and the books are now on better paper.

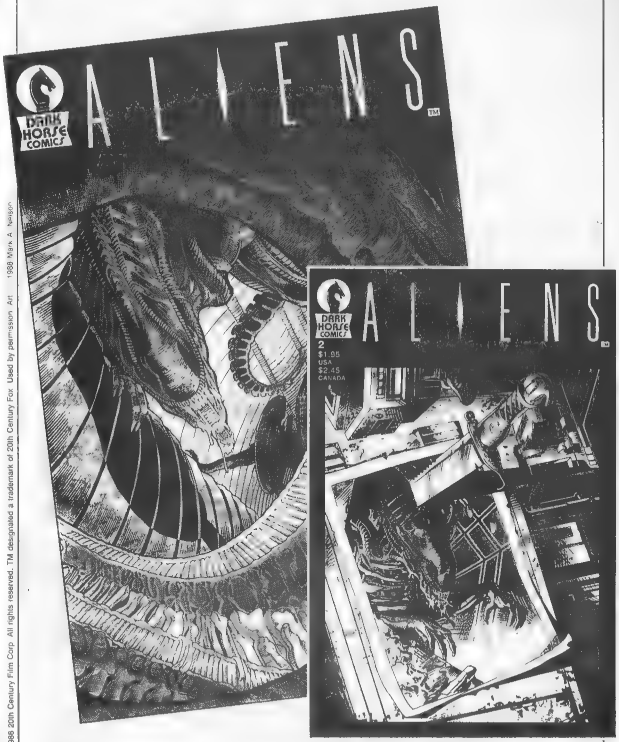
MIKE: And at the same price. As it was pointed out to us in a letter that came in, we're the first company that has gone to



Two panels from Rick Geary's THE SACK MURDER OF 1954 (from DHP #19).

The Sack Murder of 1954 © 1986 Rick Geary

"We're having to be real careful about what we do."



Mark A. Nelson's covers to Dark Horse Comics' ALIENS series.

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"We advertised in Overstreet, at least we

better product and not raised the price. We are price conscious and we want to keep our products as low as we can, as affordable as we can, and still make them with quality. Our books are coming closer and closer to the price that Marvel and DC charge, their prices continue to go up while ours stay the same. *(Laughter.)* In the beginning independent books were selling for two to three times as much as Marvel and DC, and we're slowly but surely falling into line with their prices.

ANDY: *How did you feel about being left out of Bob Overstreet's PRICE GUIDE?*

MIKE: Well, we know for a fact that we will be back in it. **Don and Maggie Thompson** wrote an editorial in CBG about that, **Bud Plant** wrote a letter about it —

RANDY: I think there were quite a number of Dark Horse fans who wrote letters to **Overstreet** to complain about it, they sent us copies.

MIKE: Yeah. He must have got a lot of comment on it because he immediately announced that he had made a mistake.

ANDY: *Weren't your color books noted but — or some of your color books noted —*

RANDY: All of the color books were in there including BORIS THE BEAR INSTANT COLOR CLASSICS, which is just a *reprint* of BORIS THE BEAR —

MIKE: Which wasn't included. Whatever they used as their guide as to what went in was not very valid. Some of the color books they put in there were the worst kind of amateur garbage, and some of the black-and-whites that they left out were the highest quality comics. I'm not just saying that about us, other companies had wonderful work left out because they were black-and-white. This is supposed to be a comic-book price guide and their motto, it says right in there, is ...

RANDY: THE *OFFICIAL* COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE.

MIKE: Yeah, and if it is it is, color doesn't make a comic book.

ANDY: *Do you think Bob was acting as an arbiter of taste?*

MIKE: No, I think that he has a problem in that there's so much stuff that's come out — and so much of it is *bad* — that he may not be aware of what's going on in the market today. I know that he has a good understanding of the market 20 and 30 years ago, but I'm sure he's not as in touch with the market now as he was at one time. I think when faced with this onslaught of black-and-white product, much of it bad, *most* of it bad, he made a decision not to carry any of it, and it was *after* it was pointed out that there was a lot of good product in black-and-white that he decided that maybe that wasn't the way to reduce the size of that PRICE GUIDE. It's going to be huge eventually if things continue the way they have been.

ANDY: *He left you out even though you had placed an ad for Dark Horse Comics in there, isn't that correct?*

MIKE: Yes, we advertised in there, and I think at *least* we should have been told that we weren't going to be included. You know, our concern shouldn't be whether Dark Horse is in a price guide or not, we don't try to pander to the collectors market, we just want to put out good comics. But the thing that bothered me, the reason I got so upset, was their decision that black-and-white comic books weren't really comics, whereas *color* made something a legitimate comic book. I could — and I don't want to insult

From the sketch book of Bill Loebs (creator of JOURNEY).

All artwork © 1988 Wm. Loebs

should have been told we weren't included."

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PANT
THE EDITORS
1989 Rich Hedden & Tom McWeeney

Rick (Hedden) & Tom (McWeeney) give us a glimpe at their working relationship!

anybody — but I could go through there and pull out names of comics that were included that are laughable, the worst kind of amateur work. The decision whether to include something or not to include it shouldn't be whether it's color or not, it should be whether it's professionally done material. It's very simple to look at the material and make the decision this doesn't deserve to be in there and this does. Of course somebody's going to have to make that decision but in a lot of cases it's an easy decision to make, it's by whatever standards you use when you buy books.

ANDY: *Especially when some of the Dark Horse books have won awards.*

MIKE: Yeah. We were nominated for eight Golden Apple awards, we were nominated for six Eisners and five Harveys, and in the Harveys **Paul Chadwick** won best cartoonist and best new series. For the Golden Apple awards **Mark Verheiden** won best new character for the American. These are awards given to the entire industry, DC and Marvel included, and our books won these awards, and they're not in THE PRICE GUIDE because they're black-and-white. A pretty ridiculous way to decide what goes in and what does not.

RANDY: CONCRETE also placed very well in the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE awards even though it didn't win anything.

MIKE: Yeah, it did so well that **Don Thompson** wrote a special nice try award.

RANDY: It placed higher in more categories than any other so-called independent, whatever that word means.

MIKE: Of course CONCRETE *deserves* it, it's so good. Whatever awards Paul gets he deserves, it's a very outstanding and special comic.

ANDY: *What new projects do you have coming up?*

MIKE: Well, like I said before, we've got PREDATOR coming, that's four issues with **Mark Verheiden** writing and **Chris Warner** art.

ANDY: *That's coming when?*

MIKE: That hasn't been put on the schedule yet, either right after the first of the year or next spring I would imagine. It will be solicited when it's finished.

ANDY: *And that will be an adaption of the movie but with a different flavor?*

MIKE: It takes place afterwards.

ANDY: *Continuing Schaefer's fight against extraterrestrials.*

MIKE: No, we're going to explain that Dutch is sick because of a nuclear explosion. *(Laughter.)* I don't want to give too much of the story away but the character we'll use will be Dutch Schaefer's big brother.

RANDY: That actor has control of his image.

ANDY: *Okay. Then you have a Roy Thomas book?*

MIKE: Yeah. We've entered into an agreement where it *looks* like we'll be doing a series of Roy adapting different **Robert E. Howard** characters. He's gotten the rights to the non-Marvel **Howard** characters.

ANDY: *So will you be doing that as a series?*

MIKE: No. The first one will be a four-issue series in color, and there's no artistic team been named at this point. We haven't decided when to put them on the schedule, sometime around the first of the year. And we've got the CONCRETE COLOR SPECIAL that will be out in November, 24 pages of new material and the rest filled out with color reprints of the early DARK HORSE PRESENTS stories.

ANDY: *And that will all be done by Paul Chadwick.*

MIKE and RANDY: Yes, yes!

ANDY: *Do you have anything else upcoming on your schedule?*

RANDY: We've got the Great Big Little Books.

MIKE: Yeah, we'll be having FLAMING CARROT, CONCRETE, and MR. MONSTER, their own Big Little Books.

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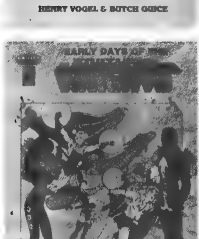

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"We're not aiming to become an industry giant."

ANDY: *How are those being done?*
MIKE: Exactly like *all* Big Little Books.
ANDY: *A page of illustration, a page of text.*
MIKE: Yes.
ANDY: *Hardcover?*
MIKE: The same as the old ones.
ANDY: *About how many pages?*
RANDY: Anywhere from 300 up.
ANDY: *When are those going to be on the market?*
MIKE: Sometime in early '89.
ANDY: *Are those going to be getting bookstore distribution?*
MIKE: That's the plan.
ANDY: *And you had a project named PIT BULLS that you were working on for awhile*
MIKE: Yeah, it's still in progress. Again, we're not going to solicit it until it's done. It's got a compilation of **Rick Geary** cartoons he did for NATIONAL LAMPOON and other magazines. It doesn't have an exact title yet, but Rick is a real talent, there's some amazing stuff. I *hope* that more comic-book readers will become interested in his work, he's a comics artist who isn't really appreciated anymore in the comics market.
ANDY: *Any more projects?*
MIKE: OUTLANDERS.
RANDY: Which is a new Japanese series that we've contracted with Studio Proteus to do, **Johji Manabe** is the artist. It's the story about the headstrong alien princess who comes to Earth to watch her invasion fleet kick butt on us humans, and she ends up falling in love with a human and going up against this vast galactic empire. It's going to be running in 40-page issues, right now it's broken into about 40 issues.
MIKE: Larger size issues.
RANDY: And it'll be monthly. **David Lewis** and **Toren Smith** at Studio Proteus are translating it. We wanted to do a Japanese series and we originally tried to find out if we could get AKIRA, but we couldn't get anybody to answer us and we found out why later. *(Laughter.)*
ANDY: *Yeah, I noticed you have them in your bookshelf.*
MIKE: OUTLANDERS was our next choice, it's a good story and good art.
RANDY: Also we're working on a **Basil Wolverton** SPACEHAWK reprint book, and if all goes according to plan we've contracted with a writer and an artist to produce a new SPACEHAWK story without *aping* **Wolverton's** style but in that same tradition.
MIKE: And I want to make clear, too, that even though it's public domain we are paying royalties to the **Wolverton** family.
ANDY: *Even though you don't have to.*

The Mark #3 cover art by **Tony Salmons.**

MIKE: Even though we don't have to, because it was a character completely and totally associated with **Basil Wolverton,** he was the only one who ever worked on it. The one thing **Wolverton** fans might be interested in, and they'll appreciate this, is that the title of it is SPACEHAWK VS. THE BRAIN-BATS OF VENUS. *(Laughter.)*
ANDY: *Okay.*
RANDY: And we've got a bizarre little character called Duckman that will be popping up here and there.
ANDY: *How do you mean popping up?*
MIKE: You'll just have to be keeping your eyes open and he'll be popping up. *(Laughter.)*
ANDY: *Now your company, talking about creative freedom and only publishing books that you want to do and all of the critical acclaim you've gotten, sounds almost too good to be true. How do you feel about Dark Horse's place in the comics industry? What do you portend for its future?*
MIKE: Well, I think that we're going rather nicely right now, at last we have a *feel* to our line, people can know what to expect from us. I don't think that anyone anymore has to worry about the type of projects we're putting out. I'm getting a lot of enthusiasm. ALIENS seems to be throwing us out before an audience that had never really paid attention to us. We get letters, like Randy said earlier, from people who say that they had never looked at our line before and how much they enjoyed our books now that they had. I'm really enthusiastic about our future. Everything seems to be on an upbeat and I think the projects we have coming up are as exciting as anything we've done so far.
RANDY: What he said. *(Laughter.)* I agree with Mike, I'm real excited about the future of the company. We're not aiming to become an industry giant in the number of books that we put out, but it's nice to know that people are enjoying working for us, and the readers are enjoying the books we've been publishing. Somebody said to me since we're getting bigger pretty soon Dark Horse isn't going to be a fitting name for the company anymore, and I said, "Well, when we reach that point we'll just enjoy the irony of it."

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LAST WORD

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GIVE HIM COMICS INTERVIEW OR GIVE HIM DEATH!

Dear David,

David! Don't *do* that! I mean, you started off #54 with a column by you which was titled "Last Chance" and started talking about us readers missing issues of COMICS INTERVIEW. I thought you were talking about cancellation! I thought COMICS INTERVIEW was going to bite the dust! No more fine interviews with people from all walks of comicdom! No more great insights into life in general and comics in particular! No more heated letters attacking my (ahem) emminently reasonable views on censorship while at the same time quite seriously misinterpreting what I actually said! Well, you can *imagine* my distress upon contemplating this sorry state of affairs! (Okay, so I admit I could live without those "heated letters"...) But of course, foolish me fell for your silvered words once again and COMICS INTERVIEW is apparently healthy and here for years to come. Actually, your words did not mislead me so much as I jumped to a conclusion. (So sue me.)

And if I didn't already have all of the issues since #1, I might be tempted to buy some of those advertised back issues at those reasonable prices! Especially #24 (hint, hint), featuring an interview with a certain crazed letterhack from certain Northern Climes. You see, I must say that I find it a bit embarassing that even though fully *seventeen* of the forty-eight issues listed were marked as "sold out", #24 was not one of them! Gee, I guess I'm not as widely beloved as I *thought*, eh? (Oh well, maybe #24 will sell out if I buy *another* 187 copies of it, eh, David?)

I enjoyed the interview with voice actress **June Foray**. Apart from its other charms, it's always great to hear something about the classic ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE cartoon show! One of the two great classic TV cartoon shows, in my opinion. (The other being, in case you're interested, BUGS BUNNY.) But say, could we have something on the story behind Dudley Do-Right? To many people south of the border, this funny-talking Mountie who rides backwards on his horse epitomizes the Canadian identity. What's the secret behind this non-Canadian Canadian icon?! Inquiring minds want to know! Really! (Truth to tell, Dudley isn't exactly an accurate reflection of modern Canadian reality, you know. Why, I haven't seen a funny-talking Mountie riding backwards on his horse for *weeks*!)

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X-MEN ON TV X-CRUCIATED

Would you please inform me WHERE, in all of the Marvel sources, I may find the statement that Wolverine is Australian? Also, has anyone considered the fact that as a previous INTERNATIONAL spy/assassin/etc. any IDENTIFYING accent could not survive if the person in question intended to survive?

The above notwithstanding, if Wolverine is going to have an accent that you could cut with a knife, then why doesn't Storm, Nightcrawler, and Colossus have thick, THICK accents ALSO?

On the whole, the preview episode that I saw at the Dallas Fantasy Fair in July 1988, was FUN. The overall use of the available characters of the X-MEN cast is excellent. I look forward to some very enjoyable afternoons/Saturday AMs.

Janie Jackson
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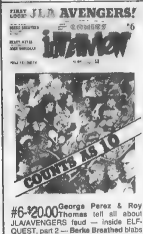

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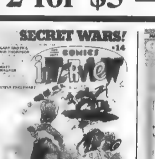

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